(b) A survey on Childhood Blindness was conducted in Delhi earlier this year by the team from AIIMS. There is no proposal to conduct similar surveys in other parts.

(c) School Eye Screening Programme under NPCB is being undertaken throughout the country for detection and correction of refractive errors.

Review of guidelines on small pox vaccination

801. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the World Health Organisation (WHO) has called on the member countries to review the guidelines on small pox vaccination in the light of the prevailing apprehension that people may be infected deliberately with the small pox virus as part of germ warfare;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken by India to deal with the possible threats by the biological and chemical warfare in the wake of September 11 attack on New York and Washington?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C. P. THAKUR): (a) and (b) WHO has recently updated the official guidance, stating that "Existing vaccines have proven efficacy but also have a high incidence of adverse side-effects. The risk of adverse events is sufficiently high that mass vaccination is not warranted if there is no or little real risk of exposure. Individual countries that have reason to believe that their people face an increased risk of small pox because of deliberate use of the virus are considering options for increasing their access to vaccines. The vaccines would be given to people who are at risk of exposure to small pox, including health and civil workers, and would be used in a search and containment exercise should an outbreak occur."

(c) A meeting on chemical and bioterrorism was organised by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare in the recent past, in which Secretaries of Home and Health from various States/Union Territories participated. They have taken stock of the preparedness to face any situation including availability of drugs and all the States/UTs have been asked to strengthen their public health system to handle the situation effectively.

Backlog of vacancies reserved for SCs/STs and OBCs

802. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether 'backlog/carried forward vacancies' reserved for SCs/STs and OBCs are required to be treated as a 'separate and distinct group' as provided under Article 16(4) (b) of the Constitution to overcome 50 per cent ceiling limit on vacancies to be reserved in a year; and

(b) if so, the 'backlog/carried forward vacancies' ascertained as per para 5 of the DOPT OM No. 36012/2/96-Estt.(Res), dated 2nd July, 1997 in respect of SCs, STs and OBCs in Group A, B, C and D categories of services as on 29th August, 1997 in his Ministry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) and (b) The requisite information is being collected and shall be laid on the Table of the House.

India's offer in crisis management

803. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India had offered USA to send 100 doctors and 1,000 litres of blood to New York to help in crisis management;

(b) if so, whether USA does not accept blood from India;

(c) whether some of the Indian families in America had wanted to donate blood after the attack but the US Government did not accept the blood as the people had visited India recently;

(d) if so, the reasons given by the US Government; and

(e) whether India had protested to America on this?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.P. THAKUR): (a) The Indian Red Cross Society had offered to provide 1000 units of blood among other support to its counter part, American Red Cross during the September 11 crisis in New York.

(b) The American Red Cross, while appreciating such offers from various Red Cross Societies from all over the world declined assistance as they were meeting their own demands.

(c) to (e) These were based on some anecdotal reports appearing in newspapers and have not been confirmed.